



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Johnny Key, Commissioner

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Key Selected as Next Commissioner of Education

LITTLE ROCK — Former Sen. Johnny Key has been named the next commissioner of the Arkansas Department of Education.

In a meeting today, the State Board of Education unanimously voted to approve Key as commissioner. The selection has the support of Gov. Asa Hutchinson, who previously recommended Key for the position.

“Johnny has always exhibited a passion for education, from his work as a legislator who focused on educational issues to his recent post with the University of Arkansas System,” Hutchinson said. “As chairman of the Senate Education Committee, he was noted for his leadership, consensus-building and bipartisan approach. We are lucky to have someone with his skill set, demeanor and vision as the next education commissioner. He will do an outstanding job.”

Key will start March 26 and replaces Tony Wood, who has served as commissioner since July 1, 2014, after serving as deputy commissioner for four years.

“We are pleased to employ Johnny Key as the next commissioner of education,” State Board of Education Chairman Sam Ledbetter said. “Johnny is highly respected for his integrity and fairness. He will continue the work of the Arkansas Department of Education to improve the opportunity of every child in Arkansas to receive the very best education possible. We look forward to working with Mr. Key.”

Prior to being named commissioner, Key served as associate vice president for university relations at the University of Arkansas System, a position he held since August 2014.

“I am very honored to be selected to serve as Arkansas’ next commissioner of education,” Key said. “Our children are our most important asset, and they deserve our best effort. I will work diligently with

the staff at ADE, parents, communities, and our partners at schools, districts and education associations to ensure every student receives a quality education. Working together, we can and will shift the discussion from educational adequacy to educational excellence.”

Key began his career in public service in 1997 when he was elected to serve as a justice of the peace on the Baxter County Quorum Court. He was elected to three two-year terms in the House of Representatives, followed by a tenure in the Senate that began in 2008.

While in the Senate, Key served as chair of multiple committees: the Senate Education Committee; Arkansas Legislative Council Administrative Rules and Regulations Committee; Joint Retirement and Social Security Committee; and Arkansas Lottery Commission Legislative Oversight Committee. He served as vice chair of the Joint Budget Committee; Arkansas Legislative Council Policy Making Committee; Academic Facilities Oversight Committee; and Joint Committee on Public Retirement and Social Security Programs.

Key graduated from Gurdon High School and received a Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering in 1991 from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville.

He has received many awards, including the 2013 Legislative Pacesetter of the Year by the Arkansas Campaign for Grade-Level Reading; the 2012 Distinguished Service Award from the Arkansas State University at Jonesboro; 2012 Invest in Life Award from the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences Cord Blood Bank of Arkansas; the 2011 Guy Newcomb Award from the Arkansas Pharmacists Association; and the 2010 Person of the Year by Arkansas Phi Beta Lambda.

Key and his wife, Shannon, live in Little Rock and have one son, Ryan, and one daughter, Rachel.

Photos are available at <http://www.arkansased.org/divisions/communications/photo-gallery/album/60>.

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